

AFTER THE FIRE CONTINUING TO SERVE YOU

*FROM THE FIRE CHIEF
OF THE COLLEGE STATION
FIRE DEPARTMENT
(979) 764-3859*

The College Station Fire Department responds to fires each year where victims are in a state of confusion, shock and despair. Even though the flames and smoke are gone, recovering from a fire may take a long time. This pamphlet was designed to assist you in reducing your losses after the fire is out. If at any time, you can not find the help that you need, please phone 764-3700, (our non-emergency dispatcher) and ask for a Fire Department Battalion Chief to contact you. The Battalion Chief will assist you in locating the appropriate individual or agency to help you. It is our privilege to serve you.

Sincerely

David Giordano
Fire Chief

The First 24 Hours

While the College Station Fire Department personnel are on the scene of a fire, the structure on fire is their responsibility. When they leave, the building becomes your obligation again.

Caution

Do not enter the damaged site until the College Station Fire Department gives you a Property Release Form. Fires can re-ignite from hidden, smoldering remains. Normally, the fire department will see that utilities (water, electricity and natural gas) are either safe to use or are disconnected before they leave the site. Do not attempt to turn on utilities yourself. Be watchful for structural damage caused by the fire. Roofs and floors may be damaged and subject to collapse. Food, beverages and medicines (including those in your refrigerator or freezer) exposed to heat, smoke, soot and water should not be consumed.

Step One *Protecting Yourself*

If you are forced to move due to a fire and it is safe to do so, try to find and take the following items with you: 1) important identifications and legal documents; 2) vital medicines (such as insulin, blood pressure, or heart medication), take these with you in order to get refilled and then dispose of them; 3) eyeglasses, hearing aids or other personal aids; 4) valuables such as money, insurance policies, credit cards, jewelry, checking and savings account books.

Replacement Of Valuable Documents And Records

Here's a checklist of documents you will need to replace if they have been destroyed, and who to contact for information on the replacement process.

ITEM

Driver's license, Auto registration
Bank books (checking, savings, etc.)
Insurance policies
Military discharge papers
Passports
Birth, death and marriage certificates
Divorce papers
Social Security or Medicare cards
Credit cards
Titles to deeds

Stocks and bonds
Wills
Medical records
Warranties
Income tax records
Citizenship papers
Prepaid burial contract
Animal registration papers
Mortgage papers

WHO TO CONTACT

Texas Dept. of Public Safety, 979-776-3110
Your bank, as soon as possible
Your insurance agent
Department of Veterans Affairs, 800-827-1000
U.S. Postal Service, 979-693-4142
County Clerk, 979-361-4528
Circuit court where decree was issued
Local Social Security office, 979-846-3768
The issuing companies, as soon as possible
Records department of the locality in which the property is located
Issuing company or your broker
Your lawyer
Your doctor
Issuing company
The IRS Center where filed or your accountant
U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service
Issuing company
Brazos Animal Shelter, 979-775-5755
Lending institution

Step Two

Insured/Not Insured

If you are insured, contact your insurance company as soon as possible. If you rent, contact the owner also. Your agent will know your insurance coverage. Ask the insurance company what to do about the immediate needs of the dwelling, such as covering doors, windows, and other exposed areas, and pumping out water. Ask your insurance agent/company what actions are required of you. Some policyholders may be required to make an inventory of damaged personal property showing in detail the quantity, description and how much you paid for the items. For any emergency repairs that might be necessary, create a written or photographic record of the damage sustained before repair work begins.

Your agent may also know of restoration companies that specialize in fire, smoke and water damage, as well as how to secure the building, and remove or restore its contents. If you are unable to contact your agent and need professional assistance in boarding up your home, you may contact a general contractor or a fire damage restoration firm. (Refer to Fire Damage Restoration companies in your yellow pages.)

To obtain a copy of the Fire Report, have your agent contact the College Station Fire Department at 764-3859.

If you are not insured, or if your insurance will not cover all your losses, there are many community services available to assist you. If you need daily living assistance, the **American Red Cross** is available to assist families who have been displaced from their homes through any type of disaster. They are available around the clock, every day of the year, with food, clothing, medication, glasses, and housing at **776-8279**. **You may also want to contact your own church for any assistance that they can provide.**

You may also be eligible for Income Tax casualty loss deductions; check Publication 547, Tax Information on Disasters, Casualty Losses and Thefts, available from the Internal Revenue Service Office 1-800-829-3676

Other private organizations that may be sources of aid or information:

Free or Reduced Rate Family Legal Services are available for certain income levels:

Gulf Coast Legal Foundation – Civil Legal Aid: (979) 775-5053

Brazos County Civil Legal Aid Referral: (979) 775-1693

Housing

American Red Cross – provides multiple levels of assistance if you are or are not insured.
(979) 776-8279

College Station Community Development – provides rehabilitation or replacement housing services for housing for low-income homeowners. (979) 764-3778

Habitat for Humanity of Bryan/College Station – provides new homes for families in need. All homes are built with local contributions and volunteer work crews. (979) 823-7200

Brazos Valley Council of Governments/Section 8 Housing – Assists low income families with rent.
(979) 775-3466

Clothing and Food

Texas Department of Human Services – Food stamps, Meals on Wheels, and Medicaid (979) 776-1510.

Salvation Army – Food, clothing, and medications in emergency situations. (979) 775-4541

Project Unity – provides one-stop intake/access to more than 80 local health and human service providers. (979) 821-5104

Brazos Church Pantry – 304 A West 26th Street, (979) 822-2660

St Vincent de Paul Society – emergency assistance for utilities, rent, prescription medicine, food and clothing. (979) 775-2273

Barbara Bush Parent Center/Emergency Food Bank and Giving Tree – provides a clothing closet, some household goods, and an emergency food bank. (979) 764-5504

Medical/Counseling

American Red Cross – provides multiple levels of assistance if you are or are not insured. (979) 776-8279

Brazos County Health Department – provides adult health screenings, newborn screenings, and well child exams. (979) 361-4450

Brazos Valley Community Action Agency/Family Health Clinic – provides families access to medical assistance programs as well as eligibility screening for Medicaid and Food Stamps. (979) 268-8045

College Station Independent School District – All elementary – high schools provide nurses for children who attend each school. (979) 764-5400

Texas A&M University Psychology Clinic – provides counseling services for a wide range of concerns. (979) 862-1256

Community Services Information

Brazos County Community Council – provides information and referral services about the social services in a 7 county area. (979) 822-5708

Project Unity – provides one-stop intake/access to more than 80 local health and human service providers. (979) 821-5104

Step Three

Protecting Your Family

Consider notifying the following people or organizations about your temporary address:

- Your family and friends
- Your insurance company
- The Post Office to forward mail
- Your bank
- Utility companies (electric, gas, cable, phone)
- The Social Security Administration
- The Fire Department, if the fire is under investigation
- Newspapers and magazines to stop delivery
- Your employer
- Your children's schools.
- Your mortgage company (also inform them of the fire)
- Any delivery services

Step Four

Protecting Your Property

Assessment of Fire Damage and Property Protection

The Fire Department will notify the Development Services Department if your home has sustained damage as a result of fire. The Development Services Department will conduct an inspection of your home to assess the extent of fire damage and to determine what permits are required to repair it. Before attempting any repairs, please contact the Building Department at 764-3741.

Protecting Your Property

In some cases it may be necessary to board up openings to discourage trespassers. Beginning immediately, save receipts for any money you spend. These receipts are important in showing the insurance company what money you have spent related to your fire loss and also for verifying losses claimed on your income tax.

Contact your local police departments to let them know the site will be unoccupied. Remove all valuables if you cannot live in the house. Should a firefighter or fire investigator be on the scene, they will accompany you.

Do not throw away any damaged goods until after an inventory is made. All damages are taken into consideration in developing your insurance claim.

If you are considering contracting for inventory or repair services discuss your plans with your insurance agent/company first.

BEGINNING NOW, GET RECEIPTS FOR ANY MONEY YOU SPEND! These receipts are important for showing your insurance company what money you have spent related to your fire loss and also for verifying losses claimed on your Federal Income Tax.

Valuing Your Property

You will encounter different viewpoints on the value of your property in adjusting your fire loss or in claiming a casualty loss on your federal income tax. Knowing the following terms will help you understand the process used to determine the value of your fire loss:

Your personal valuation: Your personal loss of goods through fire may be difficult to measure. These personal items have SENTIMENTAL VALUE to you; however, it is objective measures of value that you, the insurer, and the Internal Revenue Service will use as a common ground for discussion. Some of these objective measures are discussed below.

Cost when purchased: This is an important element in establishing an item's final value. Receipts will help verify the cost price.

Fair market value before the fire: This concept is also expressed as ACTUAL CASH VALUE. This is what you could have received for the item if you had sold it the day before the fire. The price would reflect its cost at purchase minus the wear it had sustained since purchase. Depreciation is the formal term used to express the amount of value an item loses over a period of time.

Value after the fire: This is sometimes called the item's salvage value.

Restoration Services

There are companies that specialize in the restoration of fire damaged structures. Whether you or your insurer employs this type of service, be clear of who will pay. Be sure to request an estimate of cost for the work. Before any company is hired check their references. These companies provide a range of services that may include some or all of the following:

securing the site against further damage

estimating structural damage

repairing structural damage

estimating the cost to repair or renew items of personal property

packing, transportation, and storage of household items

securing appropriate cleaning or repair subcontractors

storing repaired items until needed

GENERAL CLEANING/SALVAGE HINTS

Professional fire and water damage restoration businesses may be the best source of cleaning and restoring your personal belongings. Companies offering this service can be located in the phone directory.

Clothing

A word of caution before you begin: test garments before using any treatment, and follow the manufacturer's instructions. Several of the cleaning mixtures described in this section contain the substance Tri-Sodium Phosphate. This substance can be purchased under the generic name TSP. Tri-Sodium Phosphate is a caustic substance used commonly as a cleaning agent. It should be used with care and stored out of reach of children and pets. Wear rubbergloves when using if you have sensitive skin. Read the label for further information.

Smoke odor and soot can sometimes be washed from clothing. The following formula may work for clothing that can be bleached:

4 to 6 tbsp. Tri-Sodium Phosphate

1-cup household cleaner or chlorine bleach

1 gallon warm water

Mix well, add clothes, and rinse with clear water. Dry thoroughly.

WARNING – KEEP THIS MIXTURE AWAY FROM CHILDREN AND PETS

An effective way to remove mildew from clothing is to wash the fresh stain with soap and warm water, rinse, and then dry in the sun. If the stain has not disappeared, use lemon juice and salt or a diluted solution of household chlorine bleach.

Cooking Utensils

Your pots, pans, flatware, etc. should be washed with soapy water, rinsed and then polished with a fine-powdered cleaner. You can polish copper and brass with special polish, salt sprinkled on a piece of lemon, or salt sprinkled on a cloth saturated with vinegar

Electrical Appliances

Don't use appliances that have been exposed to water or steam until you have a service representative check them. This is especially true of electrical appliances. In addition, steam can remove the lubricant from some moving parts.

If the fire department turned off your gas or power during the fire, call the College Station Utilities at 764-3535 or TXU Electric and Gas Company at 1-800-460-3030 to restore these services - do not try to do it yourself.

WARNING – DO NOT MIX AMMONIA WITH BLEACH

Food

Wash your canned goods in detergent and water. Do the same for food in jars. If labels come off, be sure you mark the contents on the can or jar with a grease pencil. Do not use canned goods when the cans have bulged or rusted. Do not refreeze frozen food that has thawed.

To remove odor from your refrigerator or freezer, wash the inside with a solution of baking soda and water, or use one cup of vinegar or household ammonia to one gallon of water. Baking soda in an open container or a piece of charcoal can also be placed in the refrigerator or freezer to absorb odor.

Rugs and Carpets

Rugs and carpets should be allowed to dry thoroughly. Throw rugs can be cleaned by beating, sweeping, or vacuuming, and then shampooing. Rugs should be dried as quickly as possible - lay them flat and expose them to a circulation of warm, dry air. A fan turned on the rugs will speed drying. Make sure the rugs are thoroughly dry. For permanent rugs, you may want to consult a water damage restoration company in the yellow pages. Even though the surface seems dry, moisture remaining at the base of the tufts can quickly cause the rug to rot. For information on cleaning and preserving carpets, call your carpet dealer or installer or a qualified carpet cleaning professional.

Leather and Books

Wipe leather goods with a damp cloth, then a dry cloth. Stuff purses and shoes with newspaper to retain shape. Leave suitcases open. Leather goods should be dried away from heat and sun. When leather goods are dry, clean with saddle soap. Rinse leather and suede jackets in cold water and dry away from heat and sun.

Wet books must be taken care of as soon as possible. The best method to save wet books is to freeze them in a vacuum freezer. This special freezer will remove the moisture without damaging the pages.

If there will be a delay in locating such a freezer, then place them in a normal freezer until a vacuum freezer can be located. A local librarian can also be a good resource.

Locks and Hinges

Locks (especially iron locks) should be taken apart and wiped with oil. If locks cannot be removed, squirt machine oil through a bolt opening or keyhole, and work the knob to distribute the oil. Hinges should also be thoroughly cleaned and oiled.

WARNING – DO NOT USE GASOLINE FOR CLEANING

Walls, Floors and Furniture

To remove soot and smoke from walls, furniture and floors, use a mild soap or detergent or mix together the following solution:

4 to 6 tbsp. Tri-Sodium Phosphate

1-cup household cleaner or chlorine bleach

1 gallon warm water

Wear rubber gloves and eye protection when cleaning with this solution. Be sure to rinse your walls and furniture with clear warm water and dry thoroughly after washing them with this solution.

Wash a small area at one time, working from the floor up. Then rinse the wall with clear water immediately. Ceilings should be washed last.

Do not repaint until walls and ceilings are completely dry. It is advisable to use a smoke sealer (available in paint stores) before painting.

Your wallpaper can also be repaired. Use a commercial paste to repaste a loose edge or section. Contact your wallpaper dealer or installer for information on wallpaper cleaners. Washable wallpaper can be cleansed like any ordinary wall, but care must be taken not to soak the paper. Work from bottom to top to prevent streaking.

Wood Furniture

Do not dry your furniture in the sun. The wood will warp and twist out of shape.

Clear off mud and dirt.

Remove drawers. Let them dry thoroughly so there will be no sticking when you replace them.

Scrub wood furniture or fixtures with a stiff brush and a cleaning solution.

Wet wood can decay and mold, so dry thoroughly. Open doors and windows for good ventilation. Turn on your furnace or air conditioner, if necessary.

If mold forms, wipe the wood with a cloth soaked in a mixture of borax dissolved in hot water.

To remove white spots or film, rub the wood surface with a cloth soaked in a solution of 1/2 cup household ammonia and 1/2 cup water. Then wipe the surface dry and polish with wax or rub the surface with a cloth soaked in a solution of 1/2 cup turpentine and 1/2 cup linseed oil. Be careful - turpentine is combustible.

You can also rub the wood surface with a fine grade steel wool pad dripped in liquid polishing wax, clean the area with a soft cloth and then buff.

Money Replacement

Handle burned money as little as possible. Attempt to encase each bill or portion of a bill in plastic wrap for preservation. If money is only half-burned or less (if half or more is still in tact), you can take the remainder to your regional Federal Reserve Bank for replacement. Ask your bank for the nearest one. Or you can mail the burned or torn money by "registered mail, return receipt requested" to:

Department of the Treasury
Bureau of Engraving and Printing
Office of Currency Standards
P.O. Box 37048
Washington, DC 20013

Common Questions

1) Why are windows broken or holes cut in the roof?

As a fire burns, it moves upward then outward. Breaking the windows and /or cutting holes in the roof (called ventilation) slows the damaging outward movement and helps remove blinding smoke that obscures the actual fire. This enables firefighters to fight the fire more effectively and results in less smoke and fire damage to the structure in the long run.

2) Why are holes cut in walls?

This is done so that firefighters are sure that the fire is completely out and that there is no fire inside the walls or in other hidden places.

3) When can I return to my home?

Firefighters must have complete control of a structure that is on fire. After the fire is out, but before they leave, firefighters will do some ventilation work. That is, they will try to remove smoke by blowing fresh air into your house. Many times, you may return to your home when the firefighters leave the scene. Occasionally, when your home has been severely damaged or if arson is suspected, you may have to wait until fire investigators have finished their work and the Building Department has inspected your home.

4) How do I obtain a Fire Report or an Investigation Report?

A Fire Report is a public document that provides the general details of a fire including the date, time, location, type of fire, and who responded. Your Fire Report is available from the College Station Fire Department, 1207 Texas Avenue, phone 764- 3859. A Fire Investigation Report is a confidential document that is only done when arson is suspected in your fire. A Fire Investigation Report is completed by a College Station Fire Department Arson Investigator. This sort of report is only available by subpoena. Call 764-3709 for further information.

5) Why does a Fire Engine respond to medical emergencies when there is no fire?

The College Station Fire Department provides coordinated fire and emergency medical services. We respond to all life threatening emergency medical incidents with the nearest fire engine and ambulance. In some cases, a fire engine can arrive at an emergency scene more quickly, and hence they carry the same medications and trained personnel as an ambulance. Fire Engines and their crews can stabilize patients. The only thing they can not do is to transport patients. Combining Fire and Ambulance services allows faster response to serious accidents and illness, better use of personnel, and more effective care of patients.

REFERENCE DIRECTORY

American Red Cross – Brazos County	776-8279
Birth Certificates, City of College Station City Secretary	764-3541
Brazos Animal Shelter/ Humane Society/SPCA	775-5755
Brazos Transit District	778-4480
Bryan Animal Control	822-9102
College Station Animal control	764-3600
The Eagle Newspaper; 1729 Briarcrest Drive, Bryan	776-4444
College Station Fire Department, 1207 Texas Avenue	9-1-1 (emergency calls only)
Fire Administration	764-3705
Fire Dispatcher (non-emergency)	764-3700
Fire Investigations	764-3705
Fire Prevention	764-3781
Code Violation	764-6363
Fire Safety Education	764-3712
College Station Building Department	764-3741
College Station Independent School District	764-5400
Internal Revenue Service	800-829-3676
Police Department Emergency	9-1-1 (emergency calls only)
Police Department Information	764-3600
Salvation Army	
Emergency Shelter	779-3470
Administration	361-0618
Social Security Administration	846-3768
UtilitiesCollege Station Water and Electricity	764-3535
TXU Electric and Gas Company Emergency	800-817-8090
TXU Electric and Gas Company Information	800-460-3030
U.S. Postal Service – College Station	693-4152
Victim’s Assistance for police related crimes	764-3600

FIRE RECORD KEEPING

Date of Fire:_____ Battalion Chief:_____ Incident #:_____

EMERGENCY AND NON-EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Please fill this area in with your local phone numbers and keep copies at locations other than your home.

Emergency_____

Poison Control_____

Doctors_____

Insurance Company_____

Medical policy number_____

Home policy number_____

Auto policy number_____

Gas/Fuel Company_____

Municipality_____

Banks_____

Neighbors_____

Accountant_____

Family_____

American Red Cross_____

Shelter/Assistance_____

Pharmacy_____

Work Numbers_____

Other_____

Notes & Information
United States Fire Administration
16825 South Seton Avenue
Emmitsburg, Maryland 21727
Phone (301) 447-1000